

TNS CANADIAN FACTS

“We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us”

- ANONYMOUS

TNS Canadian Facts recently launched a new study, TNS Vibe, to track perceptions and behaviours of Canadians during this period of economic uncertainty. The first wave of data was collected between March 5 and 16, 2009, using the TNS Canadian Facts Interactive panel. A total of 1,455 Canadians participated in the study.

The national results show that close to half of the Canadian population is either very concerned (30%) or extremely concerned (14%) about global economic conditions. However, the majority (68%) feel the global economic downturn will be relatively short, believing that the economy will improve in the near-term (within six months to two years).

How does this impact travel purchase behaviour?

Economic concerns are clearly impacting consumer spending and, as expected, travel-related expenditures are affected. Respondents were presented with a broad list of 19 discretionary and essential consumer goods and services and were asked to identify where they had trimmed expenditures. Travel emerged in third spot (behind eating out, and entertainment & movies) with 34% of travellers indicating they have had some success at reducing travel-related spending. Encouragingly, considerably fewer see opportunities to further cut back in this area, suggesting that the future impacts will be limited and that travel spending may be well-placed to recover quickly when economic conditions improve.

Will they keep coming?..

Despite the inclination of many to identify travel-related expenditures as an area to potentially curtail spending, travel intentions for the next 12 months and the number of anticipated trips mirrors 2008 figures (55% of respondents intend to take a leisure trip and are planning an average of three trips). These data suggests that rather than cancelling trips outright, Canadian pleasure travellers (those who have travelled in the past 12 months and/or intend to in the coming year) are looking for ways to reduce travel-related spending:

- 38% indicate they are more likely to travel in-province,
- 19% indicate they are more likely to travel within Canada, and
- 14% indicate they are more likely to travel to short-haul US destinations.

Some specific ways in which Canadian travellers intend to trim their travel-related expenditures include the following:

- Spending less on alcoholic drinks in restaurants while travelling (62%)
- Staying in lower priced accommodation (61%)
- Travelling closer to home (57%)
- Spending less on meals while travelling (57%)
- Reduce spending on attractions and entertainment (54%)
- Flying at less convenient times (54%)



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Travel = Escapism?

A series of general attitudinal questions were posed to Canadian travellers. Interestingly, 59% shared the sentiment that spending on travel may not be especially wise in these economic conditions. Still, 51% apparently agree that thinking about future trips helps them cope with the current economic challenges. This finding suggests travel represents a form of escapism for Canadian travellers. It is a deeply engrained aspiration for most of the travelling public, and a lifestyle element that may be pursued regardless of practical arguments to the contrary.

2009 – the year of the travel deal

Therefore, while Canadians express some anxiety about travel-related expenditures, travellers intend to keep travelling despite economic uncertainties

Once the decision to take a trip has been made, however, there will likely emerge a powerful desire to explore means of containing costs (or at least feeling that one has) in order to deal with the psychological repercussions of indulging one’s travel interest. Successful tourism marketers, then, will place some emphasis on underscoring value by offering accommodation packages, food and beverage credits, discounts on attractions and entertainment as part of a package, etc. However, the impact of such initiatives can be greatly enhanced by establishing positive linkages with the formative emotional impetus behind the travel decision - the notion of travel as a deserved reward and means of coping during troubled times.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss the study in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the TNS Canadian Facts tourism research team:

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